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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 000941

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SUBJECT: GOP BRIEFS A NEW STRATCOM PLAN

Classified By: CDA Gerald M. Feierstein, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. In an April 31 meeting with A/DCM and PAO, new Minister of Information and Broadcasting Kaira described the GOP,s planned national public affairs campaign to build public support for the fight against extremism. The plan includes hiring local public relations firms to create ads for print and electronic media, public relations training for officials, content development for radio and TV, special events planning with civil society partners and nationwide polling. We expect President Zardari will brief this plan to the President next week. While encouraged that the GOP finally is thinking along these lines, its capacity to implement and fund it over the long term is yet to be seen. Kaira expressed willingness to work with the USG on the engagement of a consultant to assist in all phases of developing, coordinating and executing a strategic communications plan. In addition, he expressed interest in USG assistance in content development, training, and purchase of infrastructure. This conversation marks a new opening with the GOP in terms of strategic communications planning. Post is following for specifics on how we can coordinate assistance. End summary.

12. (C) A/DCM and PAO met April 30 with the new Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Qamar Zaman Kaira; the Secretary of the Ministry, Ashfaq Ahmad Gondal; and the Ministry's Strategic Communications Specialist, Ammara Durrani. Talking just days after the recent Pakistani military's offensive against insurgent Taliban in Buner, the Minister was keen to discuss the GOP,s planned, but yet-to-begin, public affairs campaign. Under wraps for now, but reportedly months in the making, the campaign is purportedly set to launch in the coming weeks and is designed to nurture and strengthen public opinion against the extremist elements. The Minister said they wish to capture the public ire over recent actions by extremist groups and turn that into an understanding that is the public's war to fight. The campaign will consist of five parts: 1) paid print and electronic advertising; 2) training for public spokesmen, parliamentarians, GOP officials and pundits; 3) content development for radio and television programming; 4) special events planning to develop grassroots understanding by reaching out to students, unions, government employees, NGOs and other natural constituents; and 5) nationwide polling.

13. (C) Although unclear on the amount or sources of funding for this campaign, the Minister was clear that they were not going to wait for the funding; rather, they would move ahead as soon as possible, contracting with public relations firms and others to carry out their message. We were pleased

to hear that they plan on including polling as a measure of effectiveness, and to help understand the importance of knowing where they stand to help them get where they want to go. The PAO is holding subsequent meetings with the strategic communications specialist to learn more about the program and to begin coordinating the most effective assistance we can provide to the GOP. Further communications will outline the depth of their campaign, its themes, messaging and budget. One of our biggest questions is how the GOP will implement the campaign. Lacking depth in the communications fields, in the past the GOP has contracted out these efforts, spreading the messaging to several competing public relations firms, a practice) according to some local public relations professionals - that has led to a certain level of incoherence, and ineffective campaigns.

¶4. (C) Apparent during the conversation was a lack of coordination with the military that had just begun their new campaign against the extremists in Buner. At the beginning of the meeting, the PAO pointed out that the Inter-Services Public Relations office (ISPR - the Pakistani military public affairs branch) was to hold their second press conference of the new campaign that afternoon. The Minister noted it, saying that they would be discussing operational aspects. PAO responded that with this type of kinetic action, it was important for the Government to be up front in discussing why it is carrying out these actions, how it was helping the people and what it was going to do for the people to help them recover after the fighting ended. None of that had been done to date. The Minister agreed, but it was clear that level of communication had not been considered and was likely

ISLAMABAD 00000941 002 OF 002

not part of the new campaign they are planning.

¶5. (C) When asked, the Minister admitted that the campaign had been developed in-house and that it is going to be carried out by a cell of his own staff. He admitted that they had not considered bringing in a consultant, but when asked directly if they would consider one, he agreed that there was a place for assistance and that a consultant could provide strategic communications planning and assist in the implementation of their messaging, as well as assist in coordination messages throughout the government.

¶6. (C) When advised that we were considering reprogramming funding to help them with their strategic communications, they also discussed the need for: assistance with content development for radio and television; training for their staff, parliamentarians, and government spokesmen; and assistance in the purchase of infrastructure (radio transmitters, e.g.) to help them disseminate their message to the public.

¶7. (C) The conversation jibes with two other encounters mission staff have recently had. The first was the Office of Transition Implementation (OTI) officer working with the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) Secretariat media cell who was approached by the Pakistani Military Inter-Services Public Relations office (ISPR) seeking \$700,000-800,000 to develop radio content to be aired into the FATA and Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). The second was a conversation the Information Officer had with the director of Pakistani Public Radio, who lamented the condition of their Soviet-era transmitters and the fact that the extremists are taking down their towers in the FATA. The director said that with one million dollars, they could purchase a one gigawatt transmitter that would enable them to send a strong signal into the FATA and NWFP that could not be taken down by the extremists.

¶8. (C) We have seen over the last several weeks that the will to take on extremist messaging exists within the GOP and its military. However, it is obvious that their efforts need guidance from professionals experienced in this level of strategic communications, training to develop and then carry

out these efforts on their own, and resources to acquire the infrastructure to implement their campaigns. In the past, GOP officials have been reticent to share this much information with us, or to directly look to us for assistance. We believe that now is the time to engage them more directly and to work with them to begin coordinating our efforts. To do that, we will need a substantial increase in funding, a willingness to work with the Pakistanis in unique ways, and understanding that, unlike Afghanistan and Iraq, here we do not own the airwaves or media and will need to work with the GOP as an integral partner each step of the way.

FEIERSTEIN